

A PERIOD OF ARMED TRUCE

Western imperialism, it was ready and able to put up a stubborn resistance against it.

THE NORTHERN OIL IMBROGLIO

While Reza Shah was thus emancipating Iran from inconvenient Western influences, he took care not to fall at the same time under Russian tutelage. It may be recalled here that his early military career was linked with the exploits of the Cossack Brigade, and the Brigade had a distinctly anti-Soviet record, having been commanded by the White Russian officer Colonel Starosselsky and having played an important role in curbing the Gilan revolt of Kuchik Khan. Later, when Reza Khan became a dominating force in Iranian politics, it was again his task to quell the disturbances that broke out in Iran's provinces adjoining Soviet Russia, like Khorasan and Azerbaijan. In both of these disturbances Soviet agents were implicated to a greater or lesser degree, and that complicity further estranged Reza Khan from the Soviets. What had troubled Soviet-Iranian relations since 1921 more than everything else was the problem of oil in Iran's northern provinces. The Soviet-Iranian Treaty of February 26, 1921, it may be recalled, provided for total renunciation of all former Russian concessions in Iran with the stipulation that these concessions could not be granted by Iran to any third party. Actually, as regards oil resources, only one concession was granted in 1916 to a Russian subject, Akakiy Khoshtaria. This concession was in turn based on an earlier grant made in 1896 by Mozaffar ed-Din Shah. It covered the provinces of Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Astarabad, and Khorasan. Owing to the war the oil was never

exploited there.
In 1920, before the conclusion of the Soviet-Iranian
Treaty, the
Anglo-Iranian Oil Company purchased Khoshtaria's
concession
for the sum of 200,000 pounds sterling. As a
result, a branch
of the Anglo-Iranian, the North Persian Oil
Company, was cre-
ated.

This British penetration into the north of Iran was
greatly re-
sented by Soviet Russia and did not meet with the
approval of either
the Iranian government or of interested American oil
companies, the
latter also desirous of obtaining concessions in the
northern region.